



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

"LESLIE STEPHEN."*

LESLIE STEPHEN—at this hour we may omit the "Sir," which never seemed to him "appropriate to the literary gent"—has been fortunate in his biographer. Mr. Maitland has constructed an unconventional but singularly adequate account of an unconventional literary career. As a modest legal and historical writer, rather than a professed man of letters, he has a freedom from the cant of the bellettristic shop that would have delighted Stephen's heart; yet he is as sensitive as clear-headed. Stephen inspired in all who knew him, even in those who knew him but by way of correspondence, something warmer than friendship. Clearly, Mr. Maitland has been no exception. Yet his judgment is never cajoled by affection. His attitude is consistently that of the thoroughly sympathetic but humorous friend. Thanks to this attitude, and with the aid of a wealth of letters and other documents which give the book a racy flavor of autobiography, he has drawn a lively portrait of a cheerful, melancholy, lovable man. He has, moreover, with that lack of heed to the conventions of the literary mill hinted at above, made nearly all of those observations, allusions and deductions that the periodical critic considers to be peculiarly his affair. It only remains, therefore, to retell briefly the story of that admirable and effective life, with such essays toward interpretation as a long liking for the man and his books may suggest.

Leslie Stephen was born in 1832. His ancestry was Scotch, showing for generations back a "certain greediness for work," especially in the form of literary composition. His father, Sir James Stephen, for many years Under-Secretary for the Colonies, was, in his son's phrase, a "living categorical imperative." In Leslie Stephen as a child his mother noted something of "the Wild Duck"—a disposition for a "nervous naughtiness." He was, it seems, dangerously delicate; and early in his boyhood poetry, for which he had a passion, was forbidden him as too exciting. He soon found, however, that he could get a very passable excitement from prose. Long before he went up to the University, he had conceived his lifelong delight in Boswell's "Johnson," which he read "from cover to cover, backward and forward, over and over, through and through."

* "The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen." By Frederic William Maitland. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

In 1850, Stephen matriculated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. Here, as student and don, he tarried for fourteen years, a brilliant exponent of "muscular Christianity." The delicate boy had become the "lean long-walker" of Meredith's phrase. He was a successful coach of the college eight, and he did the "two miles" in 10.54, running in trousers on grass. In those days, it was said, "his regard for appearances varied inversely as his velocity"; he was wont to shatter the academic proprieties by discarding his shirt, when it "worked up." He was, withal, a wholesome and human teacher, though another side of his idiosyncrasy is evident when we find him, in a letter to an undergraduate, referring to the head of his college as "Old Stick-in-the-mud." In 1855, he made his first ascent in the Alps, which were to be for forty years his "playground and cathedral," and in writing of his joy in the subjugation of untrod Alpine peaks he first came to feel at ease with a pen. Early in the sixties, the rationalizing influences in the intellectual air sowed this seed in his fearless and analytical mind, and, as he said, he "ceased to accept the creed of his youth, not so much because he gave up his beliefs as because he found he had never really held them."

With 1863, we come to a phase in Stephen's life which must always possess a peculiar interest for American readers. He was one of the few Englishmen of the upper or academic class who held with the North in the war for the integrity of the Union, and his partisanship was vehement. In the summer of that year he came to America, to see with his own eyes as much as he might of the travailing country. Here he met many of the men who were best worth meeting, and his letters home are full of happy characterizations.

Of Lowell he said: "He is one of the very pleasantest men I ever met. He asked me to stay over Sunday with him, and we got so very thick together that I did not leave him until this morning, after two most pleasant days." Holmes he found "a very jolly, chirpy little man," and Longfellow "a pleasant, white-bearded, benevolent-looking man of very quiet manners, who talked agreeably but not poetically, with a want of the readiness which appears to be characteristic of the literary gent in these parts." Emerson was "so kind and benevolent, and talked so much like a virtuous old saint, that we could not help liking him." In Cambridge, too, began that friendship with Mr. Nor-

ton which Stephen was to count as one of the chief treasures of his life. From Boston he journeyed to New York, where he was chiefly impressed by "marble floors and rosewood staircases," thence to Chicago, where "their manners are those of bagmen and their customs are spitting"—this was in 1863. In due course he reached Washington, where he saw Lincoln, towards whom he "felt very kindly," though Seward "provoked" him. Finally he went to the seat of war in Virginia. There he met General Meade, "a remarkably thin, cadaverous-looking cove," and saw some skirmishing. The result of this peregrination was the celebrated pamphlet on "The Times and the War."

In the mean time, his scruples in the matter of religion had forced him to resign his tutorship at Cambridge and turn for support to journalism. His editorial and "middle" articles in the "Saturday Review" and the "Pall Mall Gazette," with their peculiar pith and "bite," soon gave him a standing as one of the most telling journalists of his time. In 1871, he became editor of the "Cornhill," Thackeray's old magazine, and, having now a suitable medium, pretty definitely forsook politics for literature, and began the long series of biographies and literary studies which were collected as "Hours in a Library" and "Studies of a Biographer."

For all his multifarious journalism, wide-ranging pedestrianism, mountaineering, and engrossing domestic joys and sorrows, he found time to build two sound and scholarly books, "The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century" and "The English Utilitarians." He wrote for the "English Men of Letters Series" four of the best short biographies in the language. And, finally, in his conduct of the "Dictionary of National Biography," he achieved a *magnum opus* of the first water.

Alongside of the tale of the labors and honors of his last years, it is good to find in the slippers ease of his friendly correspondence with Mr. Norton or Mr. Lowell such engaging characterizations as these of men about whom a vast deal of highfalutin is currently uttered: Hegel—"In many things little better than an ass"; Tennyson—"The queerest old bloke, to speak irreverently, that I ever saw"; Newman—"a curious cuss"; Carlyle—"a really noble old cove, and by far the best specimen of a literary gent we can at present produce"; Hobbes—"a delightful old cuss."

At seventy, Stephen was still the Stephen who, as Mr. Bryce has said, "never reminded you of any one but himself." We read with gratification of his going to talk pessimism with a sick friend "to cheer him up," or of his shouting Mr. Newbolt's "Admirals All" in Kensington Garden to the surprise of nursery maids. And to the end, though he became totally deaf, he took pleasure in gossip and mild scandal, for, as a lady said, "he was such a human creature." After many months of a painful illness, borne with a serenity and humor good to remember, he died on the 22nd of February, 1904.

But perhaps this abstract of his life has dwelt too much upon the humorous, the shirt-discarding side of his idiosyncrasy. Like his friend Lowell, he was a many-faceted man, though perhaps a less bewildering one. "Equable" was the word that those who knew him best thought most expressive of him; to himself he seemed "skinless, over-sensitive and nervously irritable." Yet the solution of the antimony is not difficult to find. So long as he was at work he was happy. His was the victory of character over temperament.

The quality of his work is of a piece with the whole nature of the man. Its surface is of an ironic casuistry that has been known to disturb and baffle downright, Yea-and-Nay persons. But always underneath, whether he is writing an Agnostic's Apology or the Praise of Walking, of a living friend or of some worthy long lapt in lead, abides a sincerity of both heart and mind that gives him among British essayists of the soberer sort a peculiar power over the reader's regard. Macaulay's brilliancy, Arnold's "distinction," Pater's expressiveness, were not his; but the pithy humor, the humane wisdom, the sheer *friendliness* of his essays in literature and morals should give them long life.

Yet, after all, his least corruptible monument amid the dust and drift of the libraries of the future is likely to be the great "Dictionary of National Biography," of which he was the first editor and chief contributor. Anthony à Wood has his immortality no less than Milton, and Stephen will have his no less than his more glorious contemporaries, the Victorian poets. In the literary free-for-all, some fly to the goal; some run; some walk, steadily, observantly; in literature as in life, Leslie Stephen will be remembered as the Great Pedestrian.

FERRIS GREENSLET.